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honour Rustam, the great prince of Kermanshah, and they ate of the feast and the Prince Rustam also ate of the feast and drank of the wines until he was satisfied.

Now amongst the guests was the Sultan of the Persians, the father of the girl, the wife of Rustam. So when all had laid aside their hands from eating, Rustam rose to give thanks to the Sultan and to the noble guests for their coming. And on the gathering fell a great silence when the prince rose up, that all might hear him with respect. So great was this silence that in the distance could be heard the buzzing of a bee and should a fly alight on the silken tablecloth, then the sound of its alighting was audible to all. Now, as the prince arose he noised a Noise. (May it be far from you.) Now let it not be hidden from you that the Persians have also some civilisation, and amongst them, as amongst us, though a man may sneeze, or cough, and even a belch need not bury him in shame, there is a Noise which none may make without lasting disgrace, and it was this Noise which came from His Highness, the Prince Rustam, Ruler of Kermanshah.

And the Sultan and the great sheikhs and great nobles and merchants and captains heard and were astonished. And from the distance came the sound of a laugh of a slave, for truly slaves are without dignity and they do not know that conduct which is proper and seemly. And the face of the Prince Rustam became black with shame, and he turned from the assembly and went.

And the Prince Rustam returned from that multitude to his palace, nor did he look on the faces of his friends. He took from his treasury a bag of gold and ordered to be saddled his swiftest horse and he prepared for departure. Of all his servants and attendants there came to him only one, and this was a boy, a page, who loved him. And the

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page Qais said to Rustam, the prince: Permit me to accompany you, O my master. And that thing was permitted him. 539* 576

So they set forth, intending to reach the lands of the Russians, where the name of the prince and his history would not be known nor rumoured, and they rode on a path through the high mountains, and with them was neither guard nor escort. So it happened when they were traversing the lands of the Kurds that thieves seized the road and attacked them, and these thieves were of the tribes of the Hamavand. And the Prince Rustam drew his sword and as the thieves came he slew them till the road was piled with corpses, and the boy Qais drew his dagger and protected the back of Rustam his master. 539*

But the tribes of the Kurds are numerous. Is it not said, El kurad, jurad (Kurds are locusts)? And in the morning of the second day the Hamavand came and prevailed over Rustam, and he fell wounded to the ground. They took from him his sword and his horse and his bag of gold, and his clothes and his shoes, but they left him lying on the ground, for they thought him dead. And the boy Qais they took to sell as a slave.

In the morning at the rising of the sun Rustam recovered and found himself lying naked on a road in Kurdistan, and he wandered and found a village and asked of them water and they gave it. But when he asked news of Qais the boy they did not answer nor did they comprehend his words. And from village to village he asked until finally the information was accorded him, and they said: There was such a boy as you describe, and he was bought by a rajah of the Hindus, and we saw him in his retinue on the road to India, and he was chained by both hands in a state of nakedness.

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a thousand dinars in gold, and he had not a single coin in silver or in copper. And the witnesses said: The shepherd boy wins the wager.

Maqdad took the purse of the merchant and put the coins of gold and silver with his own gold, but the copper coins he caused to be thrown to the poor. And he turned to the merchant and asked the price of the horse, and a price was agreed on and paid. Then Maqdad asked the merchant for the pedigree of the horse and for his name. The merchant was astonished, and asked: Do you ask the pedigree of the horse after the price has been agreed and paid? Maqdad replied: His pedigree is written in his legs and his back and his noble head, but it must also be recorded on paper, and that is what I require. And the merchant handed the pedigree to Maqdad, saying: Verily he is descended from the Prophet's noble mare, the feather coated, the most beautiful of all. His name is Rishan, for he is of that noble breed.

Maqdad took the horse Rishan and mounted him bareback and rode to his home. And his mother brought out the saddle of his father and it fitted the horse Rishan, and she brought out the weapons which she had cleaned till they gleamed in the sun. And she brought him a bag of dates and a bag of cheese and she said: Now shall you ride to the Tigris and to the camp of the tribes, and there shall you enter the guest tent and salute the assembly, and they will bid you to be seated and bring for you coffee. Then they will ask your name, for they do not know your face, then shall you reply: I am Maqdad son of Thamir son of Degaither son of Mansur son of Maqdad son of Degaither son of Mansur son of Qais son of Hamed the Lame son of Mansur the Father of the Sword. And this name is a known name, and wherever you say it, there shall you be

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Maqdad came not. Rather he took another course, he turned and mounted Rishan, that noble horse, and he took up his great spear and he rode down on the Persian with the speed of the wind, nor could an arrow hit him, and in this manner he speared that Persian and killed him. Then he rode on to the two Persians who stood near the well and he came with such dash and speed that they had no time to draw the bow. And one of them he killed with his spear and the other fell down on the ground before him and begged mercy from him in the most abject manner. And Maqdad commanded the Persian to take off his clothes and the man did so and stood naked before Maqdad.

And Maqdad commanded and said to him: Go to your King, the Shah of the Persians, and enter his presence and salute him, and you shall be in your present naked state. And then shall you say to him: O mighty Shah, look to my condition and see my nakedness, for this shall be the condition of the land of Persia should you desist not from war with the Arabs. For when the men are slain who shall sow the fields? And the land of Persia shall become as barren and naked as I am now. And this is the message of Maqdad son of Thamir, the Arab warrior, and he is from the Fetla tribes. And Maqdad gave the Persian a horse from the six horses, and he mounted and rode off according to the order of Maqdad, nor was he wearing a single stitch of clothing.

Then Maqdad and Ibn Ali watered the horse Rishan, and they continued their journey, taking with them the five horses of the Persians, and their intention was to reach the camp of the tribes. And they rode until the sun was in the west, then they saw the black tents. And they rode up to the greatest tent of all, and it was the guest tent of the

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Fetla, and they tethered the horses and entered and saluted the assembly. And seated there were the sheikhs and the warriors of the tribe. They bade them be seated and they brought for them coffee. And the Sheikh spoke to them and said: O strangers who have honoured us, may we know your names, and from whence you come, and from what tribe? And Maqdad replied and answered thus: My tribe is your tribe, for it was the tribe of my father Thamir son of Degaither son of Mansur son of Maqdad son of Degaither son of Mansur son of Qais son of Hamed the Lame son of Mansur the Father of the Sword. But know you I have not before entered amongst you as was fitting, nor have I fought in battle with you, as before I was of tender years, but now I am a man, and I am skilled in the art of war.

And the Sheikhs and the great men of the tribes who were there assembled said: Your name is a known name, for well we remember your father and your grandfather. And out of his great courtesy the Sheikh asked of them concerning their journey, and Maqdad related those events which are known to you, my listeners, nor did he omit any word from the account. And the Sheikh spoke and said: Concerning the magician Zoro, we had information that such a one existed, and we had searched for him, but we did not find him. You have done well to encompass his destruction, for God was with you. But as for these five Persians you say you have killed, know you that boasting is unseemly, and how could a beardless boy do this deed.

And Maqdad looked and he saw disbelief written in the faces of those there present, nor did they believe his words. So he said: Look not at my face, for it is smooth, and neither my moustache nor my beard is grown, but

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saw him would say: This is a merchant whose shop is worth ten thousand gold liras.

Kadhim, dressed as a wealthy merchant, went out from the shop of the tailor and he returned to the shop of Abdul Rashid Mejid. He entered the shop and greeted Abdul Rashid Mejid and wished him the peace of God. And Abdul Rashid Mejid rose when he saw the wealthy merchant enter his shop, and he returned his greeting, and he ordered the shop boy to bring a glass of tea from the coffee house for the distinguished visitor. And Kadhim sat in the chair which Abdul Rashid Mejid placed for him.

Now, Kadhim, though a simple tribal boy, had travelled as far as Basra with the Sheikh, for in ancient times when the Sheikh travelled to Baghdad or to Basra he took fifty men in his retinue, that all who saw him might recognise his dignity and position and, as Kadhim had no land and no sheep, he used to accompany the Sheikh and eat at his expense in the hotels of Basra. So he had some knowledge of affairs.

Kadhim drank the glass of tea in the shop of Abdul Rashid Mejid and he asked after the health of his host. He said: Know you that I am a merchant of Basra and my trade is a general trade, and I deal in every article and every commodity, for my firm is a great firm with branches in India and in Persia and in Nejd. And let it be known to you that I have come to Hilla to seek a merchant of honesty and repute to act as my agent that I may transact various kinds of business at this place. So I asked from the great merchants and bankers of Baghdad that they give me the names of those merchants at Hilla who are reliable in their dealings, and they told me the name of your honour and of his honour our brother Abbas Ali el Qassab. But they said of the last named that water drips from his